

# New Tide Gate, Culvert Pitched for Cox Hall Creek

By JACK FICHTER

NORTH CAPE MAY — A hydrology study to determine how to kill Phragmites reeds in Cox Hall Creek by letting in saltwater from the bay is about half completed.

An informational meeting was held July 12 by the Cox Hall Creek Focus Group at the Property Owners of Cape May Beach Clubhouse before a standing room only crowd.

Engineer Joseph Lomax, of the Lomax Engineering Group, said allowing a controlled amount of saltwater into the marsh would reduce the risk of fire by killing Phragmites, which present a burn hazard in the fall when the plants die back. He said removing stagnant water would lessen the mosquito population plus the incoming tide would allow fish to enter the creek to eat mosquito larvae.

In addition to allowing a controlled amount of tidal water in, the creek could also be drained into the bay when too much rainfall occurs due to a Nor'easter or similar storm, said Lomax.

He noted 14 storm drains from the surrounding neighborhood flow into Cox Hall Creek.

The natural ebb and flow action of the daily tides would unblock channels that run through the marsh over a period of three years, he said.

A pump house installed along the bayside at the end of the creek by Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA) has not functioned for years, said Lomax. A culvert un-

der Clubhouse Road is much too small to allow adequate flow from the bay to the creek, he added.

A proposed project would install a new outfall pipe from the bay, build a larger culvert under Clubhouse Road with a self-regulating tidal gate, redesign and replace the pump station and reconstruct the channel between the pump station and Clubhouse Road, said Lomax.

He said berms would be built to keep saltwater from entering Mickel's Run and upland areas of the marsh where the federally protected Swamp Pink grows. It is important that the public comment favorably on the proposed project during the permitting process, said Lomax.

"This project may be done in phases over many years," said Engineer Peter Kocsik, of Hatch Mott MacDonald. "It's an expensive project and getting funding come in pieces and dribs and drabs."

With a preliminary design and permits, he said it would be viewed as a valid project and be eligible for funding. He said the project would require six or seven state permits.

Lomax said the Pond Creek Basin, near Higbee's Beach, has engineering plans completed and permits but no money to move forward on a project that would also introduce bay water to kill Phragmites.

County Planning Board expert Brian O'Connor said partners in the Cox Hall Creek project include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, state Division of Fish and Wildlife, state Department

of Environmental Protection and the county.

Kocsik said about 2,330 acres of Cox Hall Creek drain into the pump station site. A water model to predict tide heights and storm water runoff was created.

He said the existing culvert under Clubhouse Road is 48 inches wide and should be replaced with six to eight, four-foot wide pipes. He said preliminary plans for the culvert would be prepared for the county, which then can be submitted, to DEP, he said.

Kocsik said bay water would need to stay in the creek about two hours on the high tide reaching an elevation of about two feet to begin killing Phragmites.

The next step is to complete preliminary conceptual design of the project, collaborate on development of a water management and emergency management plan, finalize civil engineering drawings and prepare supporting documents for submission to regulatory agencies.

## Cape Arts Groups Win Dodge Grants

CAPE MAY — Two local arts organizations will be receiving grants from one of the state's most philanthropic foundations.

Cape May Stage and the Center for Community Arts (CCA) were on the list of recipients in the 2008 Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Arts Grant Program. This year, the Dodge Foundation provided grants to arts organizations in nineteen of the state's twenty-one counties including these two in Cape May County.

According to a press release from the foundation, 92 grants totaling \$4,130,000 were awarded to nonprofit museums and galleries, community arts organizations, and performing arts organizations in the disciplines of theater, dance, opera, and music, throughout the state of New Jersey.



Jack Fichter  
Engineer Joseph Lomax

Kocsik said Clubhouse Road would not need to be raised more than half a foot.

A resident asked what would happen if her well turned salty from the infusion of salt water into the creek.

O'Connor said Lower Township would bore a new well or connect her home to municipal water at their expense. Audience members grumbled that there were no township or MUA officials present at the meeting.

Resident Al Sherwood



Jack Fichter  
County GIS Specialist  
Brian O'Connor

said he wanted to see the document guaranteeing a new well or public water connection.

O'Connor said a pump from the pumping station was being stored in the township's Public Works garage in a state of disrepair. Resident Joan McGinnis asked why the pump was not repaired and re-installed.

Kocsik said replacement of the current pump house with a tide gate would exceed \$1 million.

Resident Stephanie Garret, who said she lives within 25 to 50 feet of the creek, asked if bulkheads would be built to protect homes. Lomax said the state would not allow berms to be built in the wetlands.

Ed Butler, vice president of the Taxpayers Association of Lower Township, said at a recent Lower MUA meeting, commissioners said they were not aware of the proposed proje

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